



# District I Parenting News

## Extension Nutrition Program

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### Deciding on Kid's Activities

Do you look forward to the beginning of the school year, with all the new activities for your children, then feel like you are going to collapse under the strain of late dinners and carpool arrangements?



Elementary school-aged children now have options far beyond piano and swim lessons. There are indoor/outdoor soccer, baseball, dance, football, gymnastics, tennis and more. Don't like sports?

Try art classes, dance, recorder lessons, drums and violin. There are 4-H, Scouts, Boys'/Girls' Clubs, after-school enrichment courses. Activities are important for school-aged children. They help kids explore their interests and build a sense of accomplishment, which builds self-esteem.

Positive experiences with well-run activities help young children build lifelong skills, like responsibility, teamwork, communication and perseverance.

Too many activities can be stressful to children and parents, can eat into family time and not allow enough "down time" for children to relax and play.

Parents should help the child choose activities, while preserving some time for homework, family and play.

Consider activities based on the child's needs, including interests and maturity level. Avoid picking activities because you wish you could have done them as a child, or because other parents are signing up their children.

Give children choices. If you believe a musical experience is important, offer several different options. If you only offer piano lessons and your child has no real interest, practice may be a struggle.

Check the values and methods of the teachers and coaches, as well as the attitudes of other par-

ents whose children are involved in the activity. If others are highly competitive and your child just wants to have fun, it may not be a good match.

Avoid too many activities at once. Your child can try a new activity once they have finished the first one. A good rule of thumb is one or two activities per semester. Take into account how much of your child's day is already structured by activities such as after-school childcare or religion classes.

Talk with your child ahead of time about how long they will participate and how much they will have to practice outside the activity. If your child believes violin lessons only involve the lesson itself, with no outside practice time, you will be in for a struggle. You don't want children flitting from one activity to a new one every two weeks if they don't like the first activity.



If you want to spend more time with your children, look for activities where you can participate. Or, choose activities where the whole family can get involved. Many sports encourage parent coaches. 4-H clubs offer opportunities for whole families.

If you feel certain activities are demanding too much time, get together with other parents to talk about changes. Some sports, such as swimming and soccer, meet several times a week and/or at odd times. If parents talk together with the coach or director, that will carry more weight than if only a single parent steps forward.

Source: Family Time @ Home Washington State University



## PARENT-CHILD ACTIVITY IDEAS

### Sticker Tag:

**To Play:** Hand each person a sheet of at least 6 stickers (for inexpensive ones, try office dots, free address labels, or even 1-cent stamps), then have everyone scatter to different areas of the yard. On the count of 3, players must try to tag one another with a sticker-ideally without getting stuck themselves.



### The Rules:

1. You can't tag the same player twice in a row.
2. You can't pull stickers off your own body to put on someone else.
3. You can designate a tree (or other area) as a base, and so long as you're touching it, no one can tag you.

Once everyone has used up all of their stickers, the person with the fewest on them wins!



### Backpack Blues

Back or neck pain is often caused by regular use of over-stuffed or poorly adjusted backpacks. If you carry a backpack, or if your child uses one, follow this advice:

- ◇ Don't over-pack. The pack should weigh no more than 10% of your weight, at most 15% for kids. If it's too heavy, you may bend forward, arch your back, or lean sideways-risks for your back, neck and shoulders.
- ◇ Wear both shoulder straps. Slings the pack over one shoulder shifts all the weight to one side. Wear it over the strongest mid-back muscles.
- ◇ Minimize the slack in the straps so the pack doesn't dangle.
- ◇ If you have to carry heavier loads, use the type of pack used by back-packers-one with padding, hip/waist belts and multiple compartments to balance the weight.

Source: UC Berkeley Wellness August 2004

### Treasure Jar



A scavenger hunt in a jar offers a new challenge Treasure Jar each time you pick it up.

**Step 1:** Let your child gather a handful of tiny "treasures" from around the house.

**Step 2:** Trace the lid of the jar onto paper and cut out that circle. On it, list all of the items your child's collected so players will know what to look for. (Or print the list from your computer.)

**Step 3:** Pour about an inch of birdseed into the jar. Drop in 3 or 4 of the small items. Add some more birdseed, then more treasures, and so on until you're within an inch of the top. Leave that final space empty so the contents will have room to move around when shaken. Screw on the lid.

**Step 4:** Tape the list of items to the lid and seal the jar shut with more tape. Give it a good shake, then see what you can find.

### What You'll Need

15 to 20 small items such as:

- ⇒ pen
- ⇒ paper
- ⇒ scissors
- ⇒ a sea shell
- ⇒ a paper clip
- ⇒ a shiny bead
- ⇒ a googly eye
- ⇒ clear packing tape
- ⇒ clear plastic jar with the label removed (for example, an 8 oz. peanut butter jar).
- ⇒ Mixed birdseed (about 1 cup)

